



The Diversity in the Commercial Business District.

As part of this analysis, Inter-Science Research Associates, Inc. staff conducted a detailed inventory of the commercial uses within the Village Business District and the Waterfront District within the Village of Sag Harbor. Uses have been identified, square footage of the spaces have been assessed, and the distribution of the variety of uses was also evaluated. Specific square footage information was obtained the Town Tax Assessor's office.

Similar to that reported in 1975, the vacancy rate for 2007 in the commercial district remains low, with few, if any shops, being available for rent. Within the Village of Sag Harbor, there are four (4) non-residential (commercial) districts: the Waterfront District, the Marine District, the Resort Motel District and the Village Business District. The following discusses the inventory of the existing conditions found in the Village Business District.

The Village Business District encompasses an area of 23.68 acres, and contains a

total of approximately 421,903 gross square feet of commercial space in one, two and three story buildings (excluding the Bulova Watchcase Factory Building). An inventory of the existing uses was undertaken as part of this evaluation, and identified 240 individual spaces/uses were contained therein, of which 167 constituted first floor space (see Table of Existing Uses contained in Appendix C).

The district is fairly well defined (and also limited) by the existing historical street patterns. Division Street creates the easterly boundary. Sage Street and Spring Street define the southern border, while Bridge Street defines the western side. Main Street bisects the district, and with the exception of a few retail spaces along Bay Street, it defines the historic character and charm of the Village Business district. The waterfront along the northern edge of the district adds significantly to the charm and desirability of this district, creating a pleasant atmosphere for visitors and residents alike to use the goods and services found in commercial district. A large part of the Village Business district is located adjacent to the R-20 single family residential zoning district.

To a large measure, the architecture as well as the composition of the first floor space defines the commercial district. Within the existing Village Business District, of the 167 spaces there are 160 first floor commercial uses, encompassing 309,674 sq. ft. of gross floor area. The diversity of retail spaces is important in establishing the character of the commercial district. The variety of uses along Main Street includes general merchandise retail, specialty shops, art galleries, restaurants, professional offices, antique, clothing and jewelry shops, motion picture and performing arts theaters and the like. The Village Business district also contains shops that provide goods and services used by local residents - a food market, pharmacy, liquor store, clothing, home furnishings, dry cleaning and

The 2007 Long Island Index states:

“A ‘sense of place’ is a key component of a community that helps create a strong bond among residents. . . . A vibrant downtown creates a strong economic base for local merchants; it gives people a place to shop for different goods and services; it gives neighbors a chance to meet and talk. It creates a town’s identity and develops a strong connection for residents to feel a part of a larger community.”

laundry services, a hardware store, computer services, and more. The diversity of uses present in the district plays a major role in vitality of the district. There appears to be a synergistic effect caused by the diversity of uses, allowing this “downtown shopping district” to thrive.

Of the 160 uses on the first floor, 65 of the spaces are dedicated to retail, comprising approximately 131,499 sq. ft. Other commercial uses, including galleries, personal service shops, hotel, fitness centers and the like comprise an additional 50 uses on the first floor, and encompass approximately 112,353 square feet of gross floor area.

The remainder of the spaces largely consist of non-retail, non-commercial uses, such as professional offices, banking and financial services and real estate office uses. There are 28 spaces occupied by these uses on the first floor of the existing Village Business District, with an area comprising approximately 43,614 sq. ft.. The median size of these uses is approximately 1,134 sq. ft. per unit. In number, non-retail and non-commercial, non-residential uses on the first floor comprise approximately seventeen percent (17.50%) of the district - a relatively small percentage of the existing commercial district.

Existing VB District - First Floor Totals

	Total Sq. Ft. of Use	Total Sq. Ft. of Uses	Percentage of Total No.
Retail:	131,499 sq. ft.	65	40.63%
Other Commercial:	112,353 sq. ft.	50	31.25%
Non-Retail Uses:*	43,614 sq. ft.	28	17.50%
Other Uses:**	22,208 sq. ft.	17	10.62%
TOTAL:	309,673 sq. ft.*	160**	

*Non-Retail Uses include professional offices, real estate, medical offices, and banks.

**Other Uses include apartments, vacant spaces, storage/warehouse space.

- h** Over 26.25% of the commercial first floor space is less than 1,000 sq. ft.
- h** Over 56.25% of the commercial first floor space is less than 1,500 sq. ft.
- h** Over 75.00% of the commercial first floor space is less than 2,000 sq. ft.
- h** Over 88.13% of the commercial first floor space is less than 3,000 sq. ft.
- h** Only 11.88% of the commercial first floor space is over 3,000 sq. ft.

The size of the commercial spaces vary significantly throughout the district, from a small space of 280 sq. ft. (Australian Femininity) to a maximum of 14,960 sq. ft. (The Sag Harbor Gym). With a total of 309,673 sq. ft. of space on the first floor within the district, the average size of the 160 spaces is 1,935 sq. ft. Interestingly, the median value is smaller - 1,394 sq. ft.

The 2006 Suffolk County Planning Commission Study identifies Sag Harbor as having a vacancy rate of only 4% (consistent with 2007 inventory used for this



study). This vacancy rate is substantially below the average level reported for Suffolk County, expressed as 7.3% county-wide. The low vacancy rate experienced by the community is a direct indicator of the vibrancy of this downtown commercial center.

When examining the other east end commercial areas, Sag Harbor has its own identity and a sense of place - it is differentiated from other nearby commercial districts like Main Street in Bridgehampton, Main Street and Newtown Lane in East Hampton, or Main Street and Job's Lane in Southampton.

Managing the appropriate use of the Village's commercial space is also paramount in maintaining the historic character of Sag Harbor. The change-of-use of commercial spaces can, under some circumstances, cause a gradual shift in the composition of the commercial district. The retail uses present, along with the many restaurant and food service uses (totaling 24 separate businesses), should be supported, as they present important opportunities for the visitors and residents of the Village, and enhance the commercial shopping district.

For example, one can observe changes that have occurred over time in the Village of Southampton Village - a slow but perceptible change in the type of commerce that takes place in its commercial district. Some of the retail stores have changed to uses which cater to high-end clientele. In some instances, financial services and real estate offices have replaced space that had been used for retail. In response to these changes, the Southampton Village Board of Trustees initiated through their Planning Commission a study that is evaluating their commercial district, and measures to preclude the change-of-use of retail space to office space along Main Street and Job's Lane, in an effort to stem this conversion and maintain a retail commercial walking district.

If not kept in balance with the need to maintain the retail trade commerce, the change in uses in the Sag Harbor business district (from local shops and stores to more exclusive retail stores and offices for real estate and financial services) has the potential to change the character of the community. Depending upon one's perspective, these changes may be perceived to be either a detriment or to the benefit.

Southampton Village, for example, has retained a number of long-term businesses - - Herrick's Hardware, Hildreth's Furnishings, Barristers, Driver's Seat and Shippy's Restaurants to name just a few - - but there appears to be a slow and

gradual change in the types of businesses found along Main Street. Professional offices, including real estate and financial services in the core commercial district are replacing what had previously been retail. As businesses change, it appears that the retail sector may also be shifting to cater to a more affluent clientele (Brooks Brothers, London Jewelers, Lilly Pulitzer, Edward Archer, Stubbs and Wootton, J. McLauchlin, and various antique and art galleries arriving to the Village). Unless replaced with an appropriate use that draws visitors, the move of the Parrish Art Museum out of the Village may also have an effect on the downtown commercial district.

For comparison purposes, a walk down Main Street in the Village of Southampton in the fall of 2007 found the following:

- h** There are approximately 78 first floor storefronts present along both sides of Main Street, from Hampton Road to Job's Lane.
- h** Of the 78 storefronts, 52 of them consist of retail, and 8 consist of restaurants or food services (including ice cream, organic foods, cheeses, etc.).
- h** Of the 78 storefronts, 18 (or 23 percent) consist of real estate offices, financial services, banks or other non-retail space. (This is compared to 28 out of 162 spaces in Sag Harbor's commercial district, or 17.5 percent of the total first floor spaces.)

In April 2006, the Board of Trustees of the Village of Southampton held a public hearing to consider a local law which would remove professional and business offices from the list of permitted uses in ground floor spaces in the business district from the Village zoning ordinance. Following public hearings, the Board of Trustees chose to table the measure, expressing concern that its areal extent (not focusing on Main Street and Job's Lane) may be too great. A new effort to re-evaluate the commercial district in the Village of Southampton is currently underway.

The November 29, 2007 edition of the Southampton Press reported that the Village of Southampton received a \$63,000 grant to fund efforts to re-examine pedestrian walkways and design open space in its business district. The article reports that this is the first initiative to be undertaken that would lead to an overall new master plan. The article states:

“While a master plan - which would take about a year to complete -would provide an overview of the entire village, special attention is currently being paid to the business district. Ms. McGann noted that the process will concentrate on increasing retail businesses in the area. The study will also review the fact that a number of storefront spaces downtown are being used as offices and examine how that may deter shoppers from the area. Ms. McGann said, “Offices in the middle of a retail area doesn’t bring foot traffic, and you need foot traffic for retail”.

Similar circumstances can be viewed in East Hampton Village on Main Street and Newtown Lane, where local stores and shops are also being replaced by higher-end retail stores as well as non-retail spaces such as real estate. The Village of Sag Harbor endeavors to guard against this change.

